

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of feeding a continuous strip (2) of packing material and a tear-off ribbon (3) to a user machine (4), the method comprising the steps of

unwinding said continuous strip (2) and said tear-off ribbon (3) simultaneously off respective reels (7, 13);

feeding the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) at the same speed along respective paths (6, 12) extending through a joining station (23);

joining the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) to each other at said joining station (23) to form a composite strip (25) of packing material; ~~and~~

feeding the composite strip (25) to said user machine (4) via a first traction assembly means (35) which ~~exert exerts~~ a first pulling force (F1) on the continuous strip (2) and tear-off ribbon (3) via the composite strip (25); and ~~being characterized by comprising the further step of~~

exerting, simultaneously with and in addition to said first pulling force (F1) and by means of a second traction assembly means (28, 29) arranged between the reel (13) for the tear-off ribbon and the joining station (23), a second pulling force (F2) on a portion (36) of said tear-off ribbon (3) extending between its respective the relative said reel (13) and said joining station (23).

2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second pulling force (F2) is exerted by winding said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) about a pulley (28), and applying to the pulley (28) a given drive torque (M) in the same direction as a travelling direction of said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) to the joining station (23).

3. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said pulley (28) is rotated by a motor (29), which is speed-controlled to impart to the pulley (28) a peripheral speed equal to the travelling speed of the tear-off ribbon (3).

4. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sum of said first and said second pulling forces force (F1, F2) is a pulling force (F3) at least sufficient to unwind said tear-off ribbon (3) off its respective the relative said reel (13).

5. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first pulling force (F1) is at least sufficient to unwind the continuous strip (2) off its respective the relative said reel (7).

6. (currently amended) A device for feeding a continuous strip (2) of packing material and a tear-off ribbon (3) to a user machine (4), the device (1) comprising

first and second supporting shafts means (9, 15) for respectively supporting a first and a second reel (7, 13) powered to rotate, in use, at the same peripheral speed, said first and said second reel (7, 13) being for a reel (7) said continuous strip (2) and said second reel (13) being for a reel (13) said tear-off ribbon (3);

first and second guide pulleys means (26, 27) for respectively guiding the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) along respective paths (6, 12);

a joining station (23) through which both said paths (6, 12) extend[;]

joining means (22, 24) located at said joining station (23) to join the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) to each other to form a composite strip (25) of packing material; and

a first traction assembly means (35) which cooperate cooperates with said composite strip (25) to transmit a first pulling force (F1) to the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3); and

~~being characterized by comprising a second traction assembly means (28, 29) arranged between the reel (13) for the tear-off ribbon and the joining station (23) to exert for exerting, simultaneously with and in addition to said first pulling force (F1), a second pulling force (F2) on a portion (36) of the tear-off ribbon (3) extending between its respective the relative said reel (13) and the joining station (23).~~

7. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein said second traction assembly means (28, 29) comprise comprises a pulley (28) which cooperates with said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3); and a motor drive means (29) for rotating said pulley (28) and for applying to said pulley (28) a given torque (M) in the same direction as a travelling direction of said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) to said joining station (23).

8. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 7, comprising wherein a logic unit control means (17) are provided to regulate said motor drive means (29) so as to rotate impart to said pulley (28) at a peripheral speed equal to said peripheral speed of said reels (7, 13) and, therefore, to a travelling speed of the tear-off ribbon (3).

9. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the first and second traction assemblies are regulated so that the sum of said first and said second pulling forces force (F1, F2) is a pulling force (F3) at least sufficient to unwind said tear-off ribbon (3) off its respective the relative said reel (13).

10. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein said first pulling force (F1) is at least sufficient to unwind said continuous strip (2) off its respective the relative said reel (7).